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## THE MISSION OF COL. JOHN LAURENS TO EUROPE IN 1781.<sup>1</sup>

[The history of the diplomatic work of Col. John Laurens in Europe in 1781 has never been fully or correctly told, because many of his papers have never been accessible to students. Some of them were published in Sparks's Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, and in The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, a government publication edited by Francis Wharton (Washington D. C., 1889.); others appeared in the published writings of Washington, and others have appeared in more or less curtailed form in the published correspondence of Franklin, Izard and others. In 1867 the Bradford Club, of New York, published a limited edition of eighty copies of "The Army Correspondence of Colonel John Laurens, in the years 1777-8," consisting of the "letters addressed to his father Henry Laurens president of Congress." These letters were edited by Wm. Gilmore Simms who prefaced them with a memoir of Col. Laurens. The papers here given relate entirely to his mission to Europe in 1781 and will be found to supply many valuable connecting links in the history of that mission. These papers were preserved and arranged by Henry Laurens, the father of Col. John, and most of them bear endorsements in the handwriting of

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<sup>1</sup>John Laurens was born in South Carolina in 1755; was educated in England and France; served on the staff of Gen. Washington during the Revolution; served with Maj. Gen. Lincoln in South Carolina in 1779, and was wounded at Coosawhatchie bridge; was a special envoy to France in 1781; returned to America at the end of the year and took part in the campaign in South Carolina in 1782; was killed in a fight with the British at Chehaw Neck, on Combahee River, August 27th. 1782.

In McClure's Magazine for December 1899, Mr. James Barnes published an article on Col. Laurens which he intended to be complimentary but which really is not, and which does not give the true account of that noble young man's life and public services.

Henry Laurens. All words of explanation by the editor are put in *italics*, and all editorial comments and numbers at the heads of papers are put in brackets ]

[1.]

Sir

Sensible that the duties to which a citizen is called by his country ought in general to be considered as indispensable—I should not ask permission of Congress to decline the commission which your Excellency announced to me in your letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> if particular circumstances in my case did not create an exception to the general rule and justify the measure—

Congress have it in their power on the present occasion to command the services of a man superiorly qualified in every respect to accomplish the object in view—a firm persuasion that the public interest will be promoted by his appointment—and a hope of being useful in the military line to which my studies have been principally directed—dictate my conduct.

My motives being those of the general good to which I profess myself devoted—will not I hope be disapproved by Congress—give me leave to assure you Sir that I entertain the most grateful sense of the honor intended me—and that I am with the most profound respect & esteem

Your Excellencys

most obed<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

JOHN LAURENS.

His Excellency The president of Congress.

*Endorsed :* Copy of a letter to Congress containing an intended Resignation from J. L. in Decem<sup>r</sup> 1780 or January 1781——

*Endorsed also :* An intended resignation To Congress in Decem<sup>r</sup> 80 or Jan<sup>y</sup> 81

[2.]

Sir,

I have received Your Excellencys letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. with the act of Congress of the 11<sup>th</sup> signifying my appointment to the office of Envoy to the Court of Versailles.

At the same that I feel myself inspired with the warmest sentiments of gratitude for this honorable testimony of their confidence—I cannot forbear regretting that a man of greater abilities and experience in affairs—did not unite their suffrages in this important business—and confess my preference for a line of service to which my studies have been almost exclusively directed—

As the Commission however has assumed the form of an indispensable duty—I beg leave to assure Congress of my devotion to the public interest—and request to be honored with their farther orders and instructions.

I am with the most profound respect and esteem

Your Excellencys

most obed<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

JOHN LAURENS.<sup>2</sup>

*Endorsed :* To Congress in December. 1780

*Endorsed also :* Copy of a letter from J. L. to Congress on his appointm<sup>t</sup> as Envoy to France——  
written in Decem<sup>r</sup> 1780——

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<sup>2</sup>It would seem that this was the letter sent to Congress; that the first was written but suppressed and the above letter then written and sent.

[3.]

Philadelphia January 1. 1781.

Sir,

You will receive herewith enclosed, a special Commission as Minister to the Court of Versailles,<sup>3</sup> as also two Letters under seal addressed to his most Christian Majesty,<sup>4</sup> with Copies of both Letters for your Information.

Likewise Instructions for your Government on the Subject of your Mission, of the 23<sup>d</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> of December last,<sup>5</sup> with Copies of Instructions to Doctor Franklin of the 28<sup>th</sup> of November & 27<sup>th</sup> of December ult<sup>o</sup> on the same Subject<sup>6</sup> for your Information; and an Estimate of the Aids requested from his most Christian Majesty

My warmest Wishes for your Prosperity, Safety and Success attend you

I am Dear Sir

with much Esteem & regard

your most obedient

& most humble Servant

SAM. HUNTINGTON President

The Honorable

JOHN LAURENS Esquire

*Endorsed :* From

THE PRESID<sup>t</sup> OF CONGRESS.

*Endorsed also :*

SAM<sup>l</sup> HUNTINGTON

1<sup>st</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1781. — —

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<sup>3</sup>See Wharton's Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence, vol. 3, p. 374. <sup>4</sup>The first of these letters will be found in the work just mentioned, vol. 4, p. 157. <sup>5</sup>Ibid pp 205 and 212. Jared Sparks's Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, Vol. IX, pp. 199 and 201. <sup>6</sup>Wharton, 4, pp. 163 and 211.

[4.]

The United States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts bay, Rhode Island & providence plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina & Georgia in Congress assembled.——

To JOHN LAURENS Esquire Greeting.—

We reposing especial trust and confidence in your fidelity, zeal, prudence and abilities have nominated and constituted, and by these presents do nominate and constitute you our Minister for the Special purpose of proceeding to the Court of Versailles, and representing to his Most Christian Majesty the present State of our public affairs, with the necessity and mutual advantage of his maintaining a naval Superiority in the American Seas, and also of Soliciting from him and forwarding to the United States, certain aids in money and Stores according to an Estimate herewith delivered to you, the better to enable us to prosecute the war with vigor, and co-operate with the arms of our ally with effect. WITNESS His Excellency Samuel Huntington Esquire President the twenty third day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand Seven hundred and Eighty, and in the fifth year of our Independence.——

SAM. HUNTINGTON President

Attest

CHAS THOMSON Secy .

*Endorsed :* The United States of America in Congress

to

JOHN LAURENS Esq<sup>r</sup> Commission of Special Minister at the Court of France 23<sup>d</sup> December 1780.

*Endorsed also :* Commission

[5.]

Great and beloved friend

The United States of America in Congress Assembled impressed with the magnanimity of your majesty and of the repeated proofs you have given of your friendly disposition towards us and also feeling the necessity of giving your majesty full information of the present state of our affairs have appointed the hon<sup>ble</sup> John Laurens Esq<sup>r</sup> lieutenant Colonel in the army of these states to repair to your Court in quality of minister to solicit the aids requested by us: And that he may give your majesty more particular & further assurances of the high regard we continue to entertain for your Majesty. We beseech your majesty to give entire credit to everything he shall deliver on our part especially when he shall assure you of the height of our friendship. And we pray God that he keep your majesty in his most holy protection

Done at Philadelphia [*torn*]

*Endorsed*: Copy of letter of credence

*Endorsed also*: Copy of a letter of credence to the French King delivered by J. L.

[6.]

On public Service

*Addressed*: Lt Col: JOHN LAURENS

Philadelphia

(War office)

War office Jany 2<sup>d</sup> 1781

Sir

The Board not having the Business of the Estimate on which you consulted them expressly committed to them by Congress cannot give you any official Directions. They only expressed their Opinion which they now repeat. That it

appeared to them to be the Intentions of Congress that all the articles procured in France as Part of the first Estimate should be credited to that Estimate & the Ballance only applied for & the whole forwarded—That the Estimate now delivered you contains what are deemed the most essential Articles but as you will be on the spot it will be adviseable that you should have discretionary Powers to judge of the Articles more particularly necessary for the service & of this your Knowledge of the Army & American Operations will enable you to form a just judgment. This being merely our opinion if you do not consider it as sufficiently directory you will be pleased to consult Congress upon the occasion.

We are Sir

with much Esteem

your very obed Servants

RICHARD PETERS

By order & in Behalf of Board

L<sup>t</sup> Col LAURENS.

*Endorsed* : From the Board of War signed Richard Peters  
War Office 2<sup>d</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1781——

*Endorsed also* : from the

Board of War

Jan<sup>y</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 1781

[7.]

Philadelphia January 12. 1781

Sir,

You will receive enclosed, a Letter under flying Seal, addressed to the Count de Vergennes on your Behalf, which was prepared before you left this City.

I have also herewith enclosed, two Packets, the one for Mr Adams, the other for Mr Dana, which I must beg may be made your peculiar Charge—It is needless to remind you these Despatches should be placed in a Situation to be sunk in Case of Capture



I have written to Governor Hancock to afford any Assistance that may be necessary in fitting the Alliance Frigate for her Voyage without Loss of Time—

I have the Honor to be  
with great respect

Sir

your most obedt and hbble servant

SAM. HUNTINGTON

The Hon<sup>ble</sup>

JOHN LAURENS.

*Endorsed :* From

THE PRESID<sup>t</sup> OF CONGRESS

Jan<sup>y</sup> 12. 1781.

*Endorsed also :* SAM<sup>l</sup> HUNTINGTON Philadelphia

12<sup>th</sup> Jan: 1781—

[8.]

(public service)

*Addressed :* The Hon<sup>ble</sup>

JOHN LAURENS Esq<sup>r</sup>.

Boston

(War office)

War office Jan<sup>y</sup> 19. 1781.

Sir

The Board having received a Letter from General Knox wherein he represents that “In Case of a Siege or any arduous operation relative to it Eight Inch Howitz would be peculiarly serviceable & that we are extremely deficient in this species of ordnance & he is extremely anxious to have twelve or fifteen more” & on the said Letter being communicated to Congress they were pleased to direct “That it be recommitted to the Board & that they take Order for having imported from France with all convenient speed the Brass Howitzers mentioned in Brig<sup>r</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Knox’s Letter” we in Consequence

of these orders request you will be pleased to add to the Estimate now in your Possession of Articles to be procured in France the Numberg Brass eight Inch Howitz mentioned by Gen<sup>l</sup> Knox & let them be sent to America with all convenient Speed. We shall be obliged by your Acknowledgment of the Receipt of this Letter that we may be ascertained of its arriving to your Hands

We have the Honour to be  
with much Esteem  
your obed Servant

RICHARD PETERS.

By order

You will please advert that  
the Howitz are to be made agreeable  
to English Measure to suit the  
Shells we have had cast in America }

Hon. JOHN LAURENS, Esqr.

*Endorsed:* The Board of War

Jan<sup>y</sup> 19. 1781.

Relating to procuring Howitzes for the American Service,  
signed RICH<sup>d</sup> PETERS—

[9.]

*Addressed:* To Colonel

HENRY<sup>7</sup> LAURENS

Boston

le 1<sup>er</sup> Février, 1781.

Mon bon et Respectable ami,<sup>s</sup>

Souvenez-vous que si vous Débarquez à L'orient à 4 mille de là vous trouverez la famille de l'homme qui vous aime avec le

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<sup>7</sup>The contents of this letter very clearly show that the writer made a slip of the pen in writing Henry for John.

<sup>s</sup> TRANSLATION BY PROF. THOMAS della TORRE : (1899)

February 1st, 1781.

My good and respected friend,

Remember that, if you land at L'Orient, you will find four miles from there the family of the man who loves you most devotedly

plus dévoué. (?) Souvenez-vous de mander à votre père que tant que l'âme battra dans le corps de Duplessis, il se resouviendra de ses bontés. Souvenez-vous de lui mander que son fils D'adoption l'aime autant que celui qui lui a été donné par la nature. Souvenez vous qu'il faut à paris aller voir M. De Gribeauval<sup>9</sup> Generallissimo D'Artillerie à qui j'écris, et qui vous recevra à bras ouvert; allez aussi voir le M<sup>is</sup> de Puységur<sup>9</sup> petit fils du Maréchal, je lui écris aussi et

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Remember to write (tell) your father that as long as Du Plessis' heart beats in his breast he will recall his goodness. Remember to tell him that his adopted son loves him as devotedly as the son whom Nature has given him. Remember, too, that when you are in Paris you must go to see M. de Gribeauval, General-in-Chief of Artillery, to whom I am now writing. He will receive you with open arms. Call also on the Marquis de Puységur, grandson of the Maréchal, to whom I am writing also. I must tell you that I owe him more than my life. You and he are the two men I love the most tenderly. Remember finally that I love you with my whole soul, and would wish your happiness at the sacrifice of my own; that neither time nor place will ever lessen the tender friendship which I have sworn you. Remember, my good friend, that I am sensitive, and that any coolness on your part would make me equally unhappy. Yes, my dear LAURENS, you know that honour has always been my guide. Well—I swear to you on my honour that I would shed my blood—yes, the last drop of my blood—with joy and ——— ? for you and your respected father. May you both be happy. Tears fall from my eyes as I write.

Your friend always,

MAUDUIT.

Write me from Boston before leaving there, and don't forget. If — — — — — can be of any use to you, don't hesitate to ask my father for it. The letter I now write you quite entitles you to do so, and will be his guarantee. There is a bill of exchange for 4000 francs ? } in the letter I am writing to my sister. Open the letter if you  
livres ? } need the money; it is at your service. M. Coissy (?), your travelling companion, is a man of great worth, and an altogether charming fellow. Every one here, high and low, is devoted to him, and we see him leave with regret. I wish you both a pleasant voyage (?) He (Coissy) can be of service to you there; he knows the ground, and all the best people. I owe him much. He has a real friendship for me, and I think I can answer for it that you may apply to him with confidence.

<sup>9</sup> The names Gribeauval and Puységur may be found in any Dictionary of Biography (French).

vous préviens que je lui dois plus que la vie. Vous et lui êtes les 2 hommes que j'aime le plus tendrement. Souvenez vous enfin que je vous aime de toute mon âme, que je voudrais votre bonheur aux dépens (dépens) Du mien, que les lieux, les temps ne diminueront jamais la tendre amitié que je vous ai voué—Souvenez-vous, mon bon ami, que j'ai l'âme sensible, et qu'un refroidissement de votre part me rendrait semblablement **malheureux**—Oui, mon cher LAURENS, vous savez que l'honneur a toujours été mon guide. Eh bien! je vous jure par mon honneur que je répandrais avec joie, avec——— (?) mon sang, oui tout mon sang pour vous et votre respectable père. Vivez tous deux heureux; les larmes me tombent des yeux. Je suis à jamais

Votre ami,

MAUDUIT.

Écrivez-moi de Boston avant d'en partir et ne l'oubliez pas. Si tout ce que——— —? vous être utile, avec confiance demander le à mon père; ce que je vous écris est un titre suffisant, et sera sa sureté. Dans la lettre que j'écris à ma soeur, il y a une lettre de Change de 4000÷; si vous en avez besoin, ouvrez la lettre, elle est à vous.

M. Coissy (?) votre compagnon de voyage est un homme du plus grand mérite, et de la plus agréable société. Tout le monde ici lui est attaché, grands et petits. On le voit partir avec peine. Je désire pour vous deux que le voyage vous———(?). Il peut vous être utile la haut; il connoît le terrain et y comprend tout ce qu'il y a de mieux. Je l'ai beaucoup dû ici, il a de l'amitié pour moi, et crois pouvoir vous répondre que vous pouvez vous adresser à lui avec confiance

*Endorsed in handwriting of Henry Laurens:* Letter from M<sup>r</sup>. Mauduit Colonel Du Plessis 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1781. Recommend<sup>g</sup> J. Laurens to his friends in France.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Notwithstanding the words on the back of the letter in Henry Laurens' writing, the writer was Chevalier Du Plessis Mauduit.—See Garden's *Anecdotes of the Rev. War.* (Charleston, 1822), p. 208.

[10.]

Dear Sir

L'Orient 9 March 1781.

The interval between my debarkation and the departure of the post allows me only a moment to apprise Y<sup>r</sup> Excellency of my arrival at this place in the frigate Alliance after a passage of twenty six days—from Boston.

I sh<sup>d</sup> have prosecuted my journey to passy without an instants repose, in order to deliver y<sup>r</sup> Excellency the dispatches of Congress and pursue under your auspices the important objects to which they relate, but the expected arrival of the Marquis de Castries detains me this evening.

I anticipate the happiness of assuring Your Excellency in person of the gratitude and veneration with which as a Citizen of America I am inspired by the distinguished part which you have acted in the present Revolution—and of my earnest desire to recommend myself to Y<sup>r</sup> Excelcys friendship—in the mean time I have the honor to be with y<sup>e</sup> most profound respect.

Your Excellencys most obed<sup>t</sup>  
very hble Serv<sup>t</sup>

*Endorsed :* Copy of a Letter from J. L. to His Excy. B. Franklin Esq. from L'Orient 9 March 1781. information of his arrival in France

*Endorsed also :* Copy of Letter to D<sup>r</sup> Franklin informing him of J. L's arrival

[11.]

L'Orient 11<sup>th</sup> March 1781.

Sir

I have the honor of informing Congress that I landed at this place on the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. and should have proceeded without an instants repose to passy had not the Commandant of the Marine assured me that the Marquis de Castries would arrive here that evening on his way to Brest—where he was going to accelerate by his presence the execution of his naval dispositions—The prospect of an immediate

conference with that minister on the objects of my mission which relate to his department—the danger of missing him by our travelling different routes—and the repeated assurances of his expected arrival detained me here till this morning—But as the delay has been much greater than I apprehended—and the Ministers approach is not announced—I have determined to pursue my journey—the Accounts which the Commandant has communicated to me of the naval preparations at Brest are that twenty five sail of the line are ready for sea, with ninety transports, on board of which are six thousand troops—that the ships of War are destined part for the W Indies and part with the troops for N America

In our voyage we captured a british privateer in company with a Venetian ship, of which he had made a prize contrary to the Laws of nations—this appeared to me a happy opportunity for manifesting the determination of Congress to maintain the rights of neutral powers as far as depends on them—After a short consultation Capt<sup>t</sup>. Barry and his officers very readily acceded to the Liberation of the Venetian and the complete Restoration of the Cargo and property—which were very valuable—The Captain was accordingly left at Liberty to pursue his voyage and the privateer was brought into port—

Mr Palfrey our Consul is not yet arrived at this Port—it is generally feared that his ship foundered in a storm which separated her and the Franklin in the commencement of their voyage—as she has not been heard of since—

I have the honor to be

His Excell<sup>y</sup> The presid<sup>t</sup> of Congress—

*Endorsed:* Copy of a Letter from J. L.<sup>11</sup> to Congress—  
L'orient 11<sup>th</sup> March 1781—

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<sup>11</sup>This letter was published in the 9th volume of Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, and by Wharton, but it was thought necessary to reprint it here in order to give a better understanding of the documents that follow, and which have not before been published.

[12.]

The Underwritten Special Minister from the United States of North America in Congress Assembled to the Court of Versailles, certifies that the bearer Cap<sup>t</sup> Tomaso Lombardo Commander of the Venetian Ship called y<sup>e</sup> Buona Compagnina had been contrary to the rights of Nations seized and detained by Francis Russell a british privateer of Glasgow—when the said Frigate by capturing the privateer had an opportunity of liberating Cap<sup>t</sup> Tomaso Lombardo with his ship and Crew, and asserting the rights of neutral powers which the Congress from a sense of justice and respect to the rights of Humanity are ever anxious to maintain

On board the American frigate, Alliance, at sea March 4<sup>th</sup>.  
1781.

This will certify All those whom it may concern that John Barry, Esq., Commander of the American frigate Alliance, has released, from Captivity, Capitano Tomaso Lombardo, Commander of a Venetian Ship called La Buonia Compagnia, who, contrary to the Laws of Nations and every principle of justice, had been seized by a British Corsair called the Alert from Glasgow in North Britain Francis Russell Commander, by whom the Venetian crew were put into irons and otherwise cruelly treated.

Captain Barry restores Captain Tomaso Lombardo to the command of his Ship, and the Venetians their freedom from a wish to preserve inviolate the law of Nations and Neutrality as acceded to by the Congress of the United States of North America.

*Endorsed :* Copies of Certificates given to Capitano Lombardo by Col<sup>l</sup> Laurens & Cap<sup>n</sup> Barry Alliance frigate at Sea, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1781—

[13.]

The Honourable Col LAURENS Esq.  
Paris

Sir!

I am extremely sorry to have mist the occasion of seeing you at your passage through this Town—it would have given me particular satisfaction to have had that honor & of tendering you my Services as a sequel of my Zeal for any thing that can concur to the good of the United States—permit me to do it by this Letter and request that you would command me when ever I can be anyways usefull—

Monsieur Labouchere has informed me that you asked whether Cap<sup>t</sup> Barnes of the Active Packet had brought any Letters or Papers for you—I do not remember to have seen any, if there was they were forwarded the day of his arrival (the 8 of last Month) according to their direction—I am in daily expectation of Letters from the hon<sup>e</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Jay to dispatch this Packet when I receive them I shall take the liberty to advise you when she may be ready to sail & any Dispatches you send will be carefully forwarded.—

I have the honor to be very respectfully  
Your most humble & devoted servant

Sir!

J. D<sup>r</sup> SCHWEIGHAUSER  
Agent for y<sup>e</sup> united States  
of America

Nantes 15 March 1781

*Endorsed by John Laurens :* from

Mons<sup>r</sup> SWEIGHAUSER  
Nantes 15<sup>th</sup> March 1781—  
Answ<sup>d</sup>



[14.]

*Addressed :* Honorable Col! JOHN LAURENS Esqr  
Paris

It is with no little satisfaction that I take up the Pen to Congratulate Colonell Laurens on his Arrival in a place where every true Friend to his Country has long wish'd him to be, Your Arrival Worthy Sir fills me with the greatest hopes for the true Interest of your Country, He who has been so remarkable an Ornament in the Field, will now have a Glorious Opportunity of being no less so in the Cabinet, It is to such Men as you Sir, that America can look up with true hopes, And not to those who have thro' Interest or private pique forgot what Claims their Country have on them—Your Task I well feel will be arduous, but at same time the true satisfaction you will Receive in putting the finishing Stroke to your Country's difficulties, will lead you on to this Important Business with as much pleasure as I saw on your Countenance when You first quitted Philadelphia to join the Army.

You no doubt will be astonished at knowing of my being still in Europe, to tell you the reasons would take up too much of Your time, suffice it then to say for the present that of all the Men who have been sent to Europe on public business none has been buffeted about as I have, and totally proceeding from because I would not employ those in the State's business that my Honour, nor my Country's Interest would not admit of. If You have seen The Hon<sup>ble</sup> Ralph Izard, & The Hon<sup>ble</sup> A: Lee, & some Letters I wrote by them & others, you will have learnt that those whose Duty it was to Aid their Country by supporting my propositions, were my greatest opponents, and that by their indefatigable endeavours they so far succeeded as to Counteract every measure I pursued for the Completion of my business, yet with all this Cruel opposition I am happy to inform you that I have now under my direction, in the State of South Carolina's Service one of the finest Ships in the World, Built here

originally by the Court of France for American Account, but thro' some means was given up or sold by our Commissioners at Paris to the French Court, who afterwards Ceded her to the Chevalier Luxembourg, with whom I entered into a Contract for her, The Shallow Banks in this River, prevented my getting Her to the Texel from July last to Nov<sup>r</sup> owing to her amazing Draft of Water, & the low Tides, last Summer, we got her over those Shoals on her Broadside for 70 Miles distance, but notwithstanding Our Efforts we could not get to Sea before the Winter set in, & the Ice forced me to seek shelter in a Creek where the Dutch Men of War run into near the Texel which was so intricate & Shallow that neither they nor us could get out till the 12th Instant, & then we had to take in all our Stores Provision & Ammunition that we discharged to lighten the Ship to get into Winter Quarters That is now all taken in, & this Week I send down about Fifteen or Twenty Thousand Pounds Sterling of Blanketting & Cloathing for Our Brave Troops, & some Articles for the Navy that I Bought on the State of South Carolina's Account on Credit, We have about Two Hundred Men on board, Am well Officered, & expect soon 280 two hundred and eighty Men from Dunkirk which The Chevalier Luxembourg, had raised for me on state account ever since last August—so that we shall have near 500 five hundred Men—thus I expect to sail about the 1st of May at farthest with Captain John Joyner an Old acquaintance of your Worthy Father's, in The South-Carolina Frigate of 28, twenty Eight Thirty Six Pounders on one deck, & 12 twelve twelve Pounders on Her Quarter Deck & Fore Castle—has all the dimensions of a 74 seventy four Gun Ship, is Calculated to sail the swiftest of any Ship I ever Saw, is provided with Stoves & Slops for Two years, this, with the amazing amount of Goods on State Account, will I trust prove Acceptable, & will also prove that we have left nothing undone that could forebode any benefit to Our Country, I am not fix'd on what Port I shall put into, but

presume it will be Boston, Rhode Island, or Philadelphia, and If you have any Commands, it will yield me pleasure to execute them, I should have had much more Goods for the State, but our long delay & disappointments have caused Our Expenses to accumulate beyond my Resources, thus was obliged to dispose of a quantity of Goods to raise Money for our disbursements, & am now still near £3000 three thousand Pound Sterling short that must be paid ere I sail, & which I feel no little difficulty in getting, for Our State being Invaded, & my property being in that State, neither that Security nor my Guarantee will now procure it, I am Guarantee in my private Name for all the Monies I have borrowed on State account, & had I now the Guarantee of Congress for Our State, I could not only readily get the Sum I now am deficient, but could procure a usefull Quantity of Goods for Our State—I wrote to Our Governor<sup>12</sup> for said Guarantee, but I never Received any Letter from Government since one in Jan<sup>y</sup> 1779, thus am acting for the best without Orders, And when I consider the trifling Sum I originally had in Europe from our State, I Console myself that I have been so successfull as to be able to fit such a Ship out (in a then Neutral Country) and have such a valuable Cargo on board all on Credit procured from my old friends—Pray have you any Letters or Orders for me or Capt: Joyner or can you give me any advices, I am groping in the dark, do enlighten me if you can, how stands matters on the Continent in General, & in South Carolina in particular, will you inform me, when the Alliance returns I would wish to write by Capt: Barry, could he & I arrange it so as to meet each other at some Port of Rendezvous we might be of more use to Our Country than arriving separate. I know no interest but that of Our Country, thus am ready to Concur in any Plan for the General Welfare—Matters are serious here, the heavy losses the Trade meets with, staggers many, but it seems as if more activity reigns in the Marine department, as their

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<sup>12</sup> Rutledge.

Ships are getting ready fast, there is now Sixteen Ships of the Line & Frigates nearly ready at the Texel, sundry building, & repairing here, yet there wants a Something to spur on their Armaments in General, If Insults & losses can do it, surely they have had enough of them stimulators, you know no doubt that M<sup>r</sup> J: A:<sup>13</sup> opened a Loan here for a Million of Guilders, I suspect it is far from full, He is at Leyden, & at times at the Hage. Mess<sup>rs</sup> John de Neufville & Son have the direction of this Loan, they strain every Nerve to accomplish it, & have been Uniform supporters of our Cause, it is they who accepted a number of drafts from Congress on your Good Father, for the Honour of the Drawers.

I have Inclosed this to my friends Mess<sup>rs</sup> Pache freres & Co Bankers, Paris, with request to deliver it in your own hands as I well know by fatal experience how liable, Letters from & to Americans are, to meet with delay, I took the Liberty of also giving them a Letter of Introduction to you, they are the best Bankers I found in Paris, have been very friendly, & very Intelligent, they can furnish you with the daily occurrences, & descriptions of Characters—

The Court of Justice appointed to consider & determine on the Conduct of the Regency & Pensionary of this City, relative to a preparative Treaty with M<sup>r</sup> Lee, has I am told acquitted the Pensionary, but Condemn'd the Conduct of the Regency, thus, that transaction appears totally disavowed, yet by all I see & learn, this Country means well to Ours, but we must receive their Aid & Countenance in the manner they think best, and as long as we understand each other, it matters not by what methods the Connection is fixed—have we any prospect of seeing you here; pray how has M<sup>r</sup> Ralph Izard, & M<sup>r</sup> A: Lee adjusted matters with Congress & their Country—May I crave a line from you that you have Received this—please direct to me & then a Cover over it directed to Mons<sup>r</sup> Jean Frederick Motte Merchant in Amsterdam—and

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<sup>13</sup> John Adams.

if you send it by a safe person to Mess<sup>rs</sup> Pache, they will have it put in the Post Office

With every wish for your Welfare, and every Sentiment of true Respect & Esteem I Am

D<sup>r</sup> Sir

Your most Obed<sup>t</sup> humble Servant

A. GILLON.<sup>14</sup>

Amsterdam 22<sup>d</sup> March 1781

The Honble Coll LAURENS Paris

*Endorsed:* from

A. GILLON-at

Amsterdam

March 22<sup>d</sup> 1781

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander Gillon was born in Rotterdam, in 1741; "his family," says Dr. Joseph Johnson, "being one of the oldest and most wealthy in that great commercial city." In 1762 he moved to London, and in 1766 to Charleston. In the same vessel with him came Mrs. Mary Cripps, a widow, and her son, John Splatt Cripps, of Kent County, England, and Gillon and Mrs. Cripps were married a few months after they reached Charleston. Gillon formed a merchantile copartnership with Florian C. May and John Splatt Cripps, and they did a very successful business in Charleston, Gillon retiring in May, 1777. 1778 the Legislature of South Carolina resolved to purchase or build three frigates in France, and to have a commodore and three captains to command them. Gillon was elected commodore, and was commissioned by President Lowndes in the spring of 1778. In the mean time he had written to Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress, and proposed to go to France and Holland for the purpose of securing arms, ammunition, supplies and funds for the United States. The offer was accepted, but before receiving notice of his appointment he received his commission as commodore in the navy of South Carolina. He sailed for Europe in September, 1778, convoyed by the *Notre Dame*. He stopped at Havana to refit, and became so strongly impressed with the importance of that post as a station for American cruisers, that he urged it on the provisions of Congress. in a letter, dated September 18th, 1778. He reached France at the beginning of 1779, and sold a cargo of indigo, rice and tobacco that was to be sold to supply the three frigates of the South Carolina navy. A large frigate, called the *Indian*, had been built in Holland for the United States, but, as a neutral nation, the government of Holland was obliged to interfere, and prevent its being turned over to the United States government. The *Indian* was then sold, and the Duke

[15.]

The Honourable Colonel LAURENS

Paris

Nantes 27 March 1781

Sir!

Referring to the Letter I have had the honor of writing you the 15 Instant I now take the liberty of inclosing you one for his Excellency Henry Laurens Esq your worthy Father requesting you would please to forward it—I have left it open that you may see the contents & as you are one of the last arrived from America witness the want they are

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of Luxemburg bought it. From him Commodore Gillon hired it for three years, and changed its name to the *South Carolina*. He began his cruise in August, 1781 first cruising in European waters, and took many prizes. He next cruised about the West Indies, where he captured ten more prizes. While refitting at Havana, in May, 1782, he united with Spanish allies, and this fleet of eighty-two vessels, Spanish and American, succeeded in capturing the Bahamas from the British, and left them under Spanish government, supported by seven or eight hundred regular troops. Shortly after this the *South Carolina* was sent to Philadelphia for repairs, and Commodore Gillon resigned his commission and returned to Charleston. He was the founder and first president of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce, in February, 1784. (See Charleston Year Book, 1883, p. 420, et seq.) He lived in a handsome house on East Bay, and had a fine country home, called "Ashley Hill," on Ashley River, near the city, next south of the Middleton place. In 1787 his wife died at their country seat on Ashley River, and soon thereafter he sold the place, and settled on the Congaree River near Totness, in St Matthew's Parish, Orangeburgh District. This place, which he called "Gillon's Retreat," he embellished with taste and elegance, and built quite a handsome house. In 1789 he married Miss Ann Purcell, daughter of Rev. Henry Purcell, D. D., rector of St. Michael's Church, Charleston. He was several times a member of the South Carolina Legislature; was a member of the South Carolina Convention by which the Federal Constitution was adopted in 1789; was one of the Commissioners appointed to lay out Columbia; was a member of the committee on the entertainment of President Washington in Charleston, in May, 1791; was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1790; was elected to Congress from the Second Congressional District (Beaufort and Orangeburgh Districts united) of South Carolina in 1791, and took his Seat March 4th, 1793. He died at "Gillon's Retreat" in 1794, and was succeeded in Congress by Robert Goodloe Harper.

in of the Duck & Ship Chandlery the board of admiralty orders & for which the amount of the bill in Question is intended—

I have the honor to be very respectfully  
your most ob<sup>t</sup> & mo hbl Serv<sup>t</sup>  
Sir J. D<sup>i</sup> SCHWEIGHAUSER.

*Endorsed by John Laurens:* from  
M<sup>r</sup> SWEIGHAUSER  
Nantes 28. March 81

Answ<sup>d</sup>

*Endorsed by Henry Laurens:* M<sup>r</sup> SCHWEIGHAUSER—  
Nantz, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1781—

[16.]

L'orient the 28. Marr 1781—

honord Sir

We beg leave to inclose you copy of the frigate alliance disbursements here, am<sup>t</sup>s to £39,080—7<sup>s</sup>—9<sup>d</sup> tournoir, exclusive of some articles furnished by the Kings officer here, w<sup>ch</sup> you will see their Cost is not yet ascertained and w<sup>ch</sup> are hereafter to be accompted for, as well as the amount of fresh Beef w<sup>ch</sup> Cap: Barry ordered to be taken up at port Louis where. the vessel has lain for some time past. we request you will point out to us the manner in w<sup>ch</sup> we are to procure our reimboursment. the wind has blown exindingly hard since yesterday, on w<sup>ch</sup> account the Pilote woud not undertake to carry either the alliance or ship marquis de La

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He was buried at "Gillon's Retreat," and a handsome monument marks the spot where he was buried. While in Holland working for the American cause he pledged his own and the State's credit for funds. Among his creditors was Peter Buyck, of Amsterdam. After Commodore Gillon's death, a son of Peter Buyck obtained judgment, and sold "Gillon's Retreat," which he bought in, and the place remained in the hands of the Buycks for generations after. (See Johnson's Traditions of the Revolution. p. 127, et seq.; Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography, Vol. 2, p. 654.)

Fayette to Sea. if it continue favourable & that it should be more moderate to-morrow, they will Cast sail. you will find two Letters, from cap: Barry inclosed to which we beg leave to refer you for further particulars and that you believe us With the utmost respect.

Honord Sir

Your most obedient &

Most humble Serv<sup>ts</sup>

Signed GOURLADE & MOYLAN

(copy)

the honorable

JOHN LAURENS Esq<sup>r</sup> & c<sup>o</sup> & c<sup>o</sup>

*Endorsed:* MOYLAN & Co

L'Orient 28<sup>th</sup> March 1781—

Respecting the disbursments  
for the Alliance Frigate—

[17.]

Estimate of the quantity of Cloathing & other Public Stores shipped on board the Marquis de la Fayette Capt Gal-  
atheau & dispatched from L'Orient the 29 March 1781—

100 Tons of Salt petre  
28 Iron 18 pound Cannon  
9,150 Suits of Regimentals  
485 Hides of Sole Leather  
8,655 Overalls  
6,614 pair of Shoes  
Superfine Cloth & Trimmings for about 500 Officers.  
12,901 black velvet Stocks.  
16,014 Hatts  
8,988 Pair Hose  
9,408 Blankets  
16,607 Shirts



Unmade	} Suppose Sufficient to make about Fifteen thousand suits. — — —
20,200 Ells of Cloth ell wide	
35,500 d° d° $\frac{1}{2}$ ell wide	
51700 d° of Linings	
11500 dble doz U S A Buttons	

Estimate of the quantity of Cloathing shipped aboard the  
Petit Cousin Capt Carrange & dispatched from Brest  
under Convoy of the Chevalier de Temays Fleet

1310 Suits of Regimentals

1400 Overalls

4040 Shirts

11000 Ells of Shirting Linnen.

*Endorsed* : Estimates—

Of the Clothing & public Stores, shipped on  
board the Marquis de la Fayette, L'Orient  
9<sup>th</sup> March 1781—& on board the Petit Cousin  
at Brest— — —

[18.]

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer, Monsieur, quelques ques-  
tions qu'il serois tres instant, que vous voulumes bien  
éclaircir, Si vous pouvés vous rendre ici Samedi matin, vous  
en Confererés avec les ministres des differens departemens.

J'ai l'honneur d'être parfaitement, Monsieur, Votre tres  
humble et tres obedient serviteur<sup>15</sup>

DE VERGENNES

Versailles, le 29. Mars 1781

M le Colonel Laurens.

*Endorsed* : from

Le Comte de Vergennes

Versailles March 29. 1781

<sup>15</sup> TRANSLATION BY REV. ROBERT WILSON, D. D. :

I have the honor to send you, Sir, some questions which it is quite  
important that you should answer very clearly. Should you be able

questions sur les quelles Monsieur le Colonel Laurens est prié de donner des solutions.

1<sup>o</sup> a quel nombre les Etats unis peuvent porter, au juste le nombre de leurs troupes Continentales.

2<sup>do</sup> d'après le nombre fixé établir quelle en est la dépense.

3<sup>o</sup> Cette dépense doit être devisée en solde et appointemens; habillemens, armemens, munitions de Guerre et de Bouche.

4<sup>o</sup> En quoi Consiste L'artillerie des Etats unis et quelle est la force de ses Equipages

5<sup>to</sup> quelles Sont les Equipages des Vivres et a Combien ils montent.

6<sup>to</sup> quels Sont les projets du General Washington dans le Cas ou son armée seroit portée a 15. 12. ou 10 mille hommes independamment du Corps françois.<sup>16</sup>

*Endorsed:* Questions

proposed by Count

de Vergennes to

J. L. March 29. 1781

With his answers inclosed.

to call here on Saturday morning you may confer on the subject with the ministers of the various departments.

I have the honor, sir, to be entirely your very humble and most obedient servant,

DE VERGENNES, [Prime Minister of France.]

Versailles, 29 March, 1781.

To Col. Laurens.

<sup>16</sup> TRANSLATION BY REV ROBERT WILSON, D. D.:

Questions which Col. Laurens is requested to answer.

1st. To exactly what point can the United States bring the number of their Continental forces?

2nd. Having fixed the number, to determine what is the expense.

3rd. This expense to be divided in full, and (also) stipends, clothing, armaments, munitions of war and commissary stores.

4th In what does the artillery of the United States consist, and what is the strength of its equipments?

5th. What are the Commissary equipments, and what do they cost?

6th. What are Gen. Washington's plans in case his army should be brought up to 15, 12 or 10 thousand men, exclusive of the French corps?

[19.]

Response à la premiere question et en partie a la seconde  
et troisieme—L'Armée Continentale d'après la derniere  
reforme, devrait être composée de

50 Regimens d'Infanterie de 612 hommes..	30,600
4 Regimens d'artillerie..de 316 .....	1,264
6 Corps Legionnaires...de 360 .....	2,160
	<hr/>
	34,024

Voyer les Etats ci-joints.

Les Calculs du Bureau de la Guerre Americain ont été  
fait d'après ce nombre—mais le degout pour le service qui nait  
de la misere du soldat, le manque d'argent et de vêtements  
ont mis de bornes très etreites au recrutement de l'armée—

On peut estimer celle qui est immediatement aux ordres du  
General Washington de la facon suivante

29 Regimens d'Infanterie de 400 soldats.....	11,600
3 Regimens d'Artillerie de 316 matrosses...	948
2 Corps legionnaires de 150 hommes ....	300
	<hr/>
	12,848

Nota—le nombre d'officiers et de bas officiers est constant  
—la paie par consequent de ces Corps est conforme anx etats  
ci-joints, en retranchant le non-complet d' hommes  
savoir.

un Regiment d'Infanterie de 400	Dollars en espee
hommes .....	5035 $\frac{2}{3}$ —29 reg <sup>ts</sup> ..146,034 $\frac{1}{3}$
un Regiment d'Artillerie (com-	
plet).....	8495.— 3 reg <sup>ts</sup> .. 25,485
un Corps legionnaire..de 150	
hommes .....	3708— 2 corps... 7,416

Paie par mois de l'Armee du Gen<sup>l</sup> Washington ...178,935 $\frac{1}{3}$

## L'Armée du Sud aux ordres du General Greene

7 Regimens d'Infanterie de 200 soldats..	1400.
1 Regiment d'Artillerie de.....	200
4 Corps legionnaires de 100.....	400
4 regimens de Milicie de 500.....	2000

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 4000
 

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## Paie de l'Armée du Sud—par mois— —

7 regimens d'Infanterie de 200 soldats

chacun..... $3,701\frac{2}{3}$ — $25,911\frac{2}{3}$ 1 regiment d'Artillerie de 200 Matrosses. . . . .  $7,529\frac{1}{3}$ 4 corps legionnaires de—100 hommes. . . . .  $3,291\frac{1}{3}$ — $13,165\frac{1}{3}$ 


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 46,606  $\frac{1}{3}$ 

## Paie par mois de l'armée aux ordres immédiatement

du General Washington, continue 178,935.  $\frac{2}{3}$ 

## Paie par mois des officiers Generaux et

des commissaires.....41,335.

Paie par mois du corps de Masechaussé..... 800.

Paie par mois d'un Regiment de Pionniers..... 6,012.

Paie par mois d'un Regiment d' Invalides..... 3,407—

## Paie par mois de 2000 Miliciens de l'Armée

du Sud—4 regimens du 500 soldats.. $5702\frac{1}{3}$ — $22,809\frac{1}{3}$ 

## Depenses du department du Marechal

General du logis par mois.....200,000.

Nota le Departement de Marechal General du logis dans le service Americain est chargé de biens d' achats et reparations contenses—du Corps de Guides et Exprès—des depenses contingentes & extraordinaires

Calcul de depenses de Provisions pour l'Armée dans son etat actuel par mois—

7259—	officiers et bas officiers d' Infanterie	
1316—	officiers et bas officiers d' Artillerie	
552—	officiers et bas officiers de Cavalerie	
1068—	officiers Generaux, Commissaries & cc.	
15000	soldats d' Infanterie	
1264	.....d' Artillerie	
750	.....de Cavalerie	
517.—	Regiment de Pionniers	
375.—	Regiment d' Invalides	
63—	Corps de Masechansé	
<hr/>		
28,164	Rations a $\frac{1}{4}$ de dollar chacun.....	211,230—
		<hr/>
		611,135—
		<hr/>
		Dollers
	Continuée .....	811,135- -

Response a la quatrieme question

L' Artillerie de Campagne

Cannons.	{	2—de 24.	
		4—de 12	
		4—de 9	
		12—de 6	
		26—de 3 et de 4.	
		==	
	}	4 Obusiers de 8 pouces	
		<hr/>	
		52 pieces	
		<hr/>	
		30 Chariots de munition	
		220 Chev-aux pour l' Artillerie et les Chariots	
		<hr/>	

Response a la 660 Chariots pour les vivres, gros, et  
cinquieme question menues baggages, et pour le service  
des Hopitaux—<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The remainder of this answer is omitted here because it is embodied in a letter which Col. Laurens wrote to the President of Congress, dated "Paris, March 29th, 1781." (See Sparks's Diplomatic Correspondence, vol. 9., p. 218 et seq. ; Wharton's Diplomatic Correspondence, vol. 4., p. 339 et seq.)

*Endorsed:* Answers to  
Questions proposed by Count de  
Vergennes  
to  
Colonel LAURENS March 29—1781

[*To be continued in the next number of this Magazine.*]

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PAPERS OF THE FIRST COUNCIL OF SAFETY  
OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN SOUTH  
CAROLINA, JUNE—NOVEMBER, 1775.

[On January 11th, 1775, there met in Charleston the first Provincial Congress of South Carolina, and took under consideration the proceedings of the Continental Congress at Philadelphia at the close of the preceding year. This Congress was in session for several weeks. When it adjourned it selected a General Committee to look after the political affairs of the people of the Province until the Congress should again convene. The battle of Lexington, on the 19th of April, 1775, so excited the people of South Carolina that the General Committee re-convened the Provincial Congress on the first of June. In a few days after meeting, this Congress decided to place the Province in a position to resist British oppression, and so provided for three regiments of regular troops and selected a Council of Safety, consisting of thirteen members, to direct the affairs of the Province. This first Council of Safety consisted of Henry Laurens, President, Charles Pinckney, Sr., Rawlins Lowndes, Thomas Ferguson, Miles Brewton, Arthur Middleton, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Bee, John Huger, James Parsons, William Henry Drayton, Benjamin Elliott and William Williamson. Peter Timothy, the Secretary of the Provincial Congress, was selected to be secretary for the Council of Safety also. The first meeting of this Council was held on the 16th of June,